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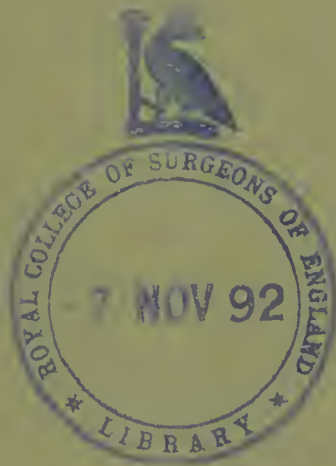
In Memoriam.

FREDERICK LE GROS CLARK, F.R.S.

(SENIOR CONSULTING SURGEON ST. THOMAS'S HOSPITAL, LATE
PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE OF SURGEONS, ETC., ETC.)

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FREDERICK LE GROS CLARK, F.R.S.
(*Senior Consulting Surgeon St. Thomas's Hospital, late President of the College of Surgeons, &c., &c.*)



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ON October 2nd, 1871, the Medical School of the New St. Thomas's Hospital was opened, the night of its obscurity at the Surrey Gardens was past, and the dawn of the day of its glory was breaking.

The Introductory Address was delivered to a brilliant and crowded audience in the Governor's Hall; it was perhaps the most important day in either the past or present history of the School, and it is doubtful whether the future, with all its rich promise, will reveal a more momentous transition.

Mr. Le Gros Clark, our then senior surgeon, was the chosen orator, and it was no small honour and no slight tribute of esteem to be selected to deliver the address upon such an occasion—an honour which fell quite naturally to him, in every way so fitted for the work.

Though twenty-one years have passed the scene will be well remembered by those whose privilege it was to be present; it was my first introduction to both the medical life, its Temples and its Deities.

The Hall was filled to overflowing, old St. Thomas's men had come to witness the renaissance of their beloved Alma Mater, and the students of the Surrey Gardens, almost bewildered at the enlarged and wonderful surroundings of their new home, mustered to the man, nor did they fail to impress the fact of their presence upon the waiting audience, in their own time-honoured and characteristic fashion! First-years men, timid and diffident, pressed nervously forward amidst the medley of old and young ladies, portly and distinguished looking old gentlemen, "parents and guardians," hospital porters and servants, all eager to be in at the start.

The autumnal sunshine flooded the handsome Hall with its golden light; around the dais were gathered the Governors and the honoured members of the Medical and Surgical staff (many of whom, alas! are no longer with us), flushed with gratified ambition at their extended spheres, and justly proud of the position their old hospital was at length taking, the reward of their many years of patient labour.

A few introductory remarks from Sir Francis Hicks, the treasurer, and then above the sea of heads rose the lofty and majestic form, the

handsome and intellectual features of Mr. Le Gros Clark, his figure then unbowed by age, his voice clear yet gentle, his eagle eyes (which in later years even never lost their power) attracting the attention, and commanding the immediate silence of all present.

I remember well that face and form, and what a god-like man he seemed amongst us! What a contrast in every way to the teachers under whom my school-days had been passed! My previous acquaintance with the profession was of the seantiest kind, and derived only from the occasional visits of the family doctor; but what a man was here! He of course, I never doubted, was a type, a sample of a class; the rest like him! Instinctively the whole profession rose before my eyes, transfigured upon the heights of that mountain, which was none other than the orator's own personality; and though experience has often failed to recognize the same exalted excellence in other members of the cloth, yet somehow, "there" the doctors seem to me to stand to-day, unconsciously associated with him by memory, and still wearing the golden raiment of his nobility.

The address that followed was all that could be desired, as those who knew him felt sure it would be, a *résumé* of St. Thomas's Hospital in the past, and of his own life-long connection with it; eloquent, pathetic, and calculated to arouse the emotions, and stimulate the efforts of all (it is published in the volume containing his 'Miscellaneous Papers,' and should be read by every St. Thomas's man). I well remember the glow of enthusiasm it aroused within me, and how I felt my young shoulders loaded with the responsibilities of the new life which was opening before me.

Perhaps I have dealt at too great length with the details of this autumn afternoon, but impressions are deep and clean upon the young mind, and new and striking as was the scene around me, and deep as was the vista of the life opening out before me, yet it was *the man* which most impressed me, and who will be the last portion of the picture to fade from the canvas of the mind, for it was he who was then labouring at the flaming forge of thought, and was endeavouring to weld the future of our lives with the golden metal of his own experience.

For a few years Mr. Clark remained our surgeon and lectured on Surgery, and honours quickly crowded upon him. Shortly after he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society, and became the President of the College of Surgeons, but his professional life-work was almost done, and as soon as the new School was fairly launched, he retired to enjoy his well-merited rest, and appeared only occasionally amongst us, delivering a few lectures, the results of his ripe and vast experience.

He was a relic of the past, of that great school which had produced such men as Astley Cooper, Tyrrell, South, Green and Cline; but probably he surpassed his masters, as in addition to his surgical attainments, he was possessed of the highest culture, of the choicest gifts of

eloquence, and of a mind imbued with the highest and loftiest principles, which regulated all his conduct. These gifts were encased in a magnificent frame, uniting personal grace, dignity, and power, with almost womanly gentleness, kindness and tenderness; perhaps the most beautiful embodiment of a cultured Christian gentleman it has ever been my privilege to meet.

As a surgeon he must have shone brilliantly among the men of his day; then surgery was more of an Art and less of a science than it now is. In these days of chloroform and bloodless surgery, when time, though more precious in every other department, can yet be more lavishly expended at the operating table, almost any "pudding-headed, leaden-hearted man" (to use a Carlylian epithet) can, if he have acquired sufficient technical knowledge, operate successfully; nay more, guarded and defended by Antiseptics, he may even clumsily explore the sacred cavities of the body, and do but little harm. But how different in Mr. Clark's day! Then the lion-heart, the swift and dexterous hand, were indispensable to success; and an extremely exact anatomical knowledge on the part of the surgeon, the patient's chief hope of passing through the perils of the operating table.

An old tar once, pointing proudly to the 'Vietory' as she lay moored in Portsmouth Harbour, scornfully said to me, "There is hardly an officer in Her Majesty's Navy now, sir, who could take that vessel out to sea! There are no sailors now, they are only a set of stokers, and all they need know is how to shovel on coal, and turn a handle of a steam valve;" and this in its way may not inaptly be applied to modern Surgery, we are so richly endowed by the labours of those who have preceded us; but who of us would be man enough to operate under the old disadvantages, without Chloroform say? Truly there were giants in those days! and a successful surgeon then, needed, I cannot help thinking, far more real ability than does his successor of to-day. Those who knew Mr. Clark could see at a glance how eminently he possessed that rare combination of eye, heart and hand which those old days demanded.

His lectures were carefully attended and highly prized; he attached particular importance to "Temperament" in its relation to surgery, a subject now almost ignored; a great deal then seemed to turn upon whether a patient belonged to the "nervous," "lymphatic," or "sanguineous temperament." Pathology necessarily occupied much time, the course of lectures on General Pathology being but a very narrow one, and of course Pyæmia, Erysipelas, and other blood poisons were then very differently regarded. Hospital gangrene and such like matters, now fortunately almost unknown, came prominently to the front; the reduction of dislocations by pulleys, which gave a large field to the artist who drew the lecture diagrams, occupied a large share of the time, and force, in its ruder forms, demanded more attention, and direction,

by the lecturer than now. To think of those days, so near in time and yet so distant in method, seems like a dream !

I need hardly say that Mr. Clark was a master of his subject, but if possible the clothing of the matter was even more remarkable in his hands than the subject itself. His eloquence was conspicuous, and never failed to command rapt attention, yet was never courted for its effect, and free from all self-consciousness on his part, it flowed in full stream, at times rising into flood, from the rich fields of his experience, earnestness, and culture. His choice of words seemed almost perfect ; one of Burke's critics once said in contrasting him with a rival orator, "he (the rival) never seems to want *a* word, but Burke never wants *the* word ;" this was also true of our beloved teacher.

I well remember his closing lecture at the Hospital, the theatre was crowded, many coming to hear the great man's last words. There were three things he said which particularly struck me—first, the earnest pleading manner in which he begged us to treat all our patients, whether high or low, with the same tenderness and consideration : "No matter how low, or base, or offensive, treat them all, gentlemen, as you would, if you were treating a Prince of Wales." The second, an appeal on behalf of professional charity and forbearance. "The longer he lived," he said, "the more favourably he learnt to regard the work of others, and the less inclined to impute either wrong motive or even wrong judgment to any of his professional brethren." "We all make mistakes, gentlemen, and the best man amongst us is the one who makes the fewest ;" and he closed the lecture with an appeal on behalf of religion and true piety ; he was a very earnest Christian of the Evangelical school, and in speaking of 'Modern Thought and its influence on Faiths,' said, "do not wrangle or dispute with those who may differ from you in these matters, but let your life be your argument." Surely no severer test of any faith, no higher standard for any life, could be desired or striven after ; and if St. Thomas's rises to a fitting sense of her indebtedness to him who has passed away, and erects as it should do, some permanent monument to the memory of him who was, as he styled himself "for fifty years a learner as well as a teacher in the school," it could inscribe no more beautiful or useful words upon the marble, than that closing sentence of his, "Let your life be your argument." It is a test to which all parties should be willing to submit, and one which might do much to silence the Babel of contending tongues ! all who knew him know that his precept was his practice, and that his life was indeed one long argument on behalf of all that is best and noblest in man.

The long and quiet evening of his life was spent in his beautiful home at Sevenoaks, surrounded by the charm of family affection and the quiet of Kentish scenery. Up to within a few months of his death,

to use his own expression, he "retained his vigour to a remarkable degree." He took much out-of-door exercise, rode about upon his favourite pony, and delighted in many animal pets, in whom his gentleness and kindness awakened to the full their animal intelligences, and who seemed one and all, to breathe his atmosphere of quiet happy enjoyment. He wrote occasional papers, and published a very valuable volume on 'Surgical Experiences' which should be in the library of every St. Thomas's man. He was greatly esteemed in circles outside his profession, being, for example, on two occasions Master of the Worshipful Company of Salters, to which Society he was much attached, and where his memory will long be green and fragrant. Nor did age wither him, but rather enhanced his striking and impressive appearance, and if possible enlarged his personal sympathies.

Few felt more deeply for the work, trials, and the temptations of student life than he, and there was no greater pleasure to him than to help and befriend his old pupils.

The last few months of his life were passed in painful weakness, but in calm, unruffled peace, and on the 24th of July his body was laid to rest.

He was regretted and beloved by all who knew him—wherever he was known his memory will be cherished with true affection; but such men do not die, their influence is eternal, and in a thousand ways they act upon the generations. Few of us can hope to be like him, few of us have been endowed with his rare and peculiar gifts, but may we not all try and catch some sweet infection from his pure and lofty life, and to reflect something of the influence which we received from his presence?

In writing the foregoing lines I have felt all through, how unfitted I am for the work, and that there are many whose acquaintance with him dates from a period so long anterior to my own, and who are so much better qualified to do justice to his memory, and honour to his name. My only apology is that I have been carried into the work by the force of real affection, which can rarely behave itself unseemly, and which never fails to insure forbearance.

J. R. LEESON, M.D., F.L.S.



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